



## **News Release**

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**Media Contact:**

Jennifer Mayfield

Adolescent Health Coordinator

801-538-9317 (o) or 801-389-1580 (m)

### **Fewer Utah Teens Getting Pregnant**

*State moving closer to 2015 goal*

(Salt Lake City, UT) – Utah’s teen pregnancy rate has fallen more than 3.5 percent in the last two years. In 2003, nearly 40 of every 1,000 girls ages 15-19 became pregnant. In 2005, the number dropped to 38 per 1,000. In 2005, the Utah Department of Health (UDOH) set an ambitious goal to cut the state’s teen pregnancy rate (includes live births, fetal deaths, and abortions) by 20 percent by the year 2015 (baseline year 2003), which would bring the rate to 32 births per 1,000.

There is more good news. Teen pregnancy rates have fallen more than 20 percent in Utah and the U.S. over the last decade. At 38 per 1,000, Utah’s rate is well below the national rate of 75 per 1,000. Despite these declines, American teens still have more babies per capita than any other industrialized nation.

Also, even though Utah’s overall rate is below the national rate, there are several areas in Utah, including Rose Park, Downtown Ogden, Glendale, and South Salt Lake, where birth rates (live births only) are alarmingly high, exceeding even national rates. UDOH Adolescent Health Coordinator Jennifer Mayfield says, “Even though certain communities are above the national rate, they have made reductions in teen births from even just a year ago.” Mayfield adds, “The fact that fewer girls are getting pregnant is encouraging and indicates that state and local prevention efforts are working.”

When broken down by race and ethnicity, the highest birth rates continue to occur among Hispanic/Latina girls between the ages of 15-19. Birth rates among this group did not change significantly from 2003 to 2005.

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## Page 2 of 2 – Fewer Utah Teens Getting Pregnant

The UDOH and its partners are working on a plan to stop so many young girls from getting pregnant. The department is helping to educate teens and parents by directing federal funds for the Utah Abstinence Education Program to seven community-based programs, including Colors of Success, the Community Building Community Initiative of Midvale City, Pregnancy Resource Center of Salt Lake, Worldwide Organization for Women and three local health departments.

The Utah Adolescent Health Network, a coalition of individuals and community groups, has developed a plan to get education and resources to teens and families. A critical part of the plan will be to help parents help their teens delay sexual activity. Research has shown that parents play a key role in pregnancy prevention. And teens who say they have high-quality relationships with their parents are more likely to make responsible choices.

The National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy offers several more tips for parents to help stop the cycle of babies having babies.

- 1) Talk with children early and often about issues regarding teen sex and pregnancy.
- 2) Show them options for the future that are more attractive than early pregnancy and parenthood.
- 3) Know your children's friends and their families.
- 4) Let your children know that you value education very highly.

In addition, the National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy has declared May as Teen Pregnancy Prevention Month. The campaign has developed a quiz for teens that presents real-life scenarios involving risky situations and asks them to choose a course of action. Youth can find the quiz at <http://www.teenpregnancy.org/>.

To learn more about teen pregnancy prevention efforts in Utah, contact Jennifer Mayfield at [jmayfield@utah.gov](mailto:jmayfield@utah.gov) or by calling 801-538-9317. More tips and information can be found at <http://www.teenpregnancy.org/resources/reading/tips/default.asp>.

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*The mission of the Utah Department of Health is to protect the public's health through preventing avoidable illness, injury, disability and premature death, assuring access to affordable, quality health care, and promoting healthy lifestyles.*